



State of New Jersey Department of Human Services

Today we mark a new beginning for the children and families of New Jersey.

Over the past year, the State of New Jersey has engaged in a sweeping and comprehensive review of its child welfare system. The process involved

hundreds of people - children and families, community members, staff of the Department of Human Services and its Division of Youth and Family

Services, academics, advocates and others. The result is a child welfare reform plan that reinvents the child welfare system in New Jersey.

A New Beginning: The Future of Child Welfare in New Jersey

Key Areas of Reform

Office of Children's Services: Creation of an office (OCS) to act as a single umbrella over three DHS divisions most concerned with child welfare: Youth and Family Services, Child Behavioral Health, the newly formed Prevention and Community Partnership and the Office of Training.

Case Practice: Focus on outcomes for children, not process for workers; separate the task of investigation of allegations of abuse from the task of ongoing service and support to families and children; increase the number of workers and decrease caseloads; provide caseworkers and families with access to adequate and appropriate services and resources in families' own neighborhoods.

Support of Resource Families: Treat resource families as valued customers of our services; recruit an additional 1000 families; streamline licensing and training for adoptive and foster families; provide new workers - Resource Family Support Workers - to assist resource families.

Serving Adolescents: Take care of the safety, permanency and well being of adolescents just as we take care of these needs of younger children; hire new workers - Adolescent Workers - to oversee the placement and services provided to adolescents in care; provide access to adolescents to housing, job training, education and life skills services as they reach adulthood.

Appropriate Placement in Institutions and Group Care: Match children with the right placements for the level of care, treatment and services that they require and then return them home or to Resource Families when appropriate.

Prevention and Community Partnership: Create a new division within OCS, the Division of Prevention and Community Partnership, to help identify and support an integrated network of services for children and families, in partnership with the communities in which they live. These services will include domestic violence, substance abuse, children's behavioral health, health and medical issues and housing. Services will be targeted to children and families currently involved with DYFS and, for the first time, those at risk of DYFS involvement.